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New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 41 (*continued*)

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/118)

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Joseph (Saint Lucia): Saint Lucia aligns itself with the statements made at the 35th meeting by the representatives of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Chile on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, and Barbados on behalf of the Caribbean Community. We are pleased to have joined the overwhelming majority of Member States by voting in favour of the resolution to end the embargo against Cuba (resolution 67/4). Saint Lucia has consistently expressed its concern that such unilateral measures run counter to international law, the sovereignty of nations, free trade and the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.

As a member of the Caribbean community, Saint Lucia has cooperated with Cuba in furtherance of the economic, social and educational advancement of the people of our region. Cuba continues to provide numerous scholarships for students in our region, who are studying various disciplines and will return to their homelands with much-needed skills to foster the development process.

Cuba's contribution in providing health care in underserved parts of the world is legendary. The training of doctors from developing countries also serves to help improve the overall health of the people of those countries. The embargo on Cuba only impedes those efforts. It is unhelpful as well as an anachronism in the twenty-first century.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): As in previous years, Uruguay voted in favour of resolution 67/4, introduced by the Cuban delegation, in the belief that the embargo against that country runs counter to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and violates the rules of international law, particularly the standards regulating international trade, which are binding on the members of the World Trade Organization.

Uruguay's position is in line with the broadest contextual definition of multilateralism, non-intervention and the peaceful settlement of disputes, all fundamental principles of our diplomacy. The situation also has an impact on another fundamental principle, that of the equality of States before the law. It is precisely because of that principle that our country rejects any unilateral

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or extraterritorial coercive measure that contravenes the rules of international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, of which the clearest current example is the unjust embargo imposed on the Republic of Cuba.

On various occasions — and I will reiterate it on this occasion — the Eastern Republic of Uruguay has stated its opposition to the economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba, with its severe effect on the well-being of the Cuban people. As a matter of principle, Uruguay rejects, and does not recognize in its national legislation, the extraterritorial enforcement of the domestic laws of other States. In that regard, we condemn the unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States on Cuba, which are a form of pressure that poses an obstacle to dialogue and to the essential rapprochement between the parties that we hope to see resumed.

In voting in favour of the resolution, Uruguay reiterates its commitment to multilateralism as a legitimate instrument for settling disputes between States and as an effective approach for promoting international cooperation, human rights, security and understanding between peoples.

Mr. Shaanika (Namibia): I would like first to join other speakers before me in conveying my deepest sympathy and condolences to the people in countries affected by Hurricane Sandy, particularly the people of our host city, New York. My delegation aligns itself with the statements made at the 35th meeting by the Permanent Representatives of Cape Verde, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Algeria on behalf of the African Group, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China, respectively. I would like, however, to make some additional comments in explanation of our vote.

My delegation voted in favour of resolution 67/4 on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America on Cuba, because we believe that sovereign nations should live in peace with one another as good neighbours and embrace the principle of open trade without any threat or use of coercive measures. It is clear that the imposition of the blockade against Cuba is a coercive tool that is inconsistent with the practice of tolerance and that it, in fact, defies the promise enshrined in the United Nations Charter that all Member States should be able "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours". In the same vein, the blockade policy does not foster the practice of tolerance or enhance peace between Cuba and the United States so that they may live as good neighbours, since it undermines that spirit of good-neighbourliness.

We do not condone the use of coercive measures as a tool to influence the policies of other sovereign and peace-loving countries. For that and other reasons, Namibia remains concerned about the promulgation and application of laws and measures that constitute an unjustifiable economic, commercial or financial blockade of any peaceful country. As we have observed today, the blockade policy has been overwhelmingly rejected by the States Members of the United Nations, because it not only inflicts pain on the people of Cuba, but also restricts their economic and social development.

Similarly, the blockade policy violates the basic human rights of the people of Cuba, because it causes irreparable damage to their economic, social and cultural way of life, key fundamentals to the pursuit of happiness. Namibia maintains the firm belief that all human rights, be they political, cultural or economic, are inseparable and therefore intertwined. Among those rights are the right to food, to better health, to education and the right of the people of any nation to develop their own country in the way they deem fit. The blockade denies the people of Cuba those fundamental human rights, just because they opted to pursue a different path to socioeconomic development.

Guided by our conviction and conscience that the blockade against Cuba is a denial of the rights I have just highlighted, Namibia voted in favour of the resolution and will continue to do so until the blockade is finally lifted. It is our hope that the United States will heed the voice of the international community expressed so clearly and loudly here today.

Mr. Khitchadeth (Lao People's Democratic Republic): I would first like to extend a warm welcome to Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, and to express to him my delegation's full support and solidarity. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend our deep condolences and sympathy to the Governments and peoples of all of the countries affected by Hurricane Sandy for the tragic loss of life and devastation it inflicted.

Let me begin by welcoming the report submitted by the Secretary-General (A/67/118) under agenda item

41. My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made by the Permanent Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China, respectively (see A/67/PV.35).

For more than four decades the innocent people of Cuba have continued to endure the misery resulting from the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America on their country. The embargo has also impeded their efforts to eliminate poverty, promote economic and social development and attain the Millennium Development Goals. It is disappointing to witness such unilateral and discriminatory commercial practices lingering in today's world of interdependence and multilateral cooperation among States. The blockade violates international law and is against the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It is a transgression of the right of a sovereign State to peace, development and security and is, in its essence and objectives, an act of unilateral aggression and a permanent threat to a country's stability.

In accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, a Member State must neither promulgate nor enforce any law, regulation or measure the extraterritorial effects of which would jeopardize the sovereignty of other Member States, since every nation has the sovereign right to participate freely in the international financial and commercial systems.

Based on the universal principle of sovereign equality under the United Nations Charter and international law, no nation has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of others, despite their different sociopolitical systems. As a sovereign and independent nation, the Republic of Cuba has the right to choose its own political system, as well as the path of development that is most relevant to its specific conditions.

Last year, 186 Member States voted in favour of resolution 66/6, which is irrefutable proof that the demand for the lifting of the blockade has the recognition and support of the vast majority of the international community. The blockade policy is also increasingly rejected both within the United States and by the international community. The United States must lift it immediately and unconditionally.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic joins the majority of the States Member of the United Nations in reaffirming the urgent need to put an end to the economic, financial and commercial embargo against Cuba. That long-lasting blockade has already caused immeasurable material loss and economic damage to the Cuban people. As Members of the United Nations, we should do as much as we can to help Cuba to fully reclaim its legitimate right to integrate into the global economy. In that spirit, my delegation voted in favour of resolution 67/4.

Ms. Miguel (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Like the overwhelming majority of States, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines voted in favour of resolution 67/4. We align ourselves fully with the statements made earlier today on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

We take the floor at this time to re-emphasize our deeply held conviction that the ongoing embargo is outmoded, ineffective and illegal. The time has long since passed for that archaic and punitive measure to be consigned to our history books as an unfortunate remnant of a bygone era. Previous versions of the resolution have been introduced in the past 20 sessions of the General Assembly and have enjoyed near-unanimous support for years. There is no other example of the international community speaking so overwhelmingly and so consistently. However, the embargo remains stubbornly in place, and its negative impacts have intensified, particularly in the wake of the ongoing global economic and financial crisis.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines finds it regrettable that a number of vague General Assembly resolutions on various topics — resolutions that have enjoyed less enthusiastic support than this one — have been seized upon by various States to justify extreme interventionist actions. In contrast, an unambiguous expression of international will is not acted upon. The theories and explanations for the continuing enforcement of the embargo — from legislative inertia to the shallow political considerations of marginal political constituencies — are insufficient to legitimize the suffering that continues to be visited upon the Cuban people.

No country represented in this Hall has the right to tell the United States how to conduct its foreign policy, who its friends should be, or how to determine its national interests. Even if such a right existed, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would not presume to

exercise it against our cherished friend and neighbour to the north. But every country in this Hall is obligated by the United Nations Charter to oppose instances where national foreign policy decisions become violations of international law or disregard the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in the domestic affairs of States.

Furthermore, in an era of economic globalization and international diplomatic engagement across the ideological spectrum, the embargo harkens back to an isolationist, confrontational era of naval blockades and military brinksmanship that have no place in our modern system of economic and political interaction.

Throughout its extended struggle with the effects of the embargo, Cuba has nonetheless remained a staunch and abiding partner in the development of our country, even in times of global hardship. Cuban universities have graduated over 250 Vincentian students and are currently playing host to 150 more, free of charge. Its surgeons have performed operations on over 3,000 Vincentian patients, without charging them a penny. Its doctors have brought quality medical care and expertise to the most remote areas of our country. Even as we speak, Cuban engineers, architects and workers are labouring alongside Vincentians in the construction of a modern hospital and our first international airport. Our appreciation cannot be overstated.

Furthermore, in a time of increasing regional integration and interaction, the Cuban economy and its markets and resources are a valuable component of our collective Caribbean development. To impede the development of Cuba through illegal extraterritorial measures is potentially to stunt the growth of Cuba's Caribbean neighbours. As we all grapple with the fallout of the global economic and financial crisis, the need to eliminate such developmental impediments is even more compelling.

None of the original architects of the embargo, nor the political principals that gave rise to it, remain in office today. Indeed, the embargo has been in existence for longer than Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been an independent nation and predates the United Nations membership of every CARICOM State, with the exception of Haiti.

Let us not allow political cowardice or ideological straitjackets to perpetuate the continuation of the unjust and harmful embargo. We continue to hope for an evolution in the thinking and actions of our friends in the United States on the matter, and we remain unequivocal in our call for the removal of that developmental constraint on our Caribbean neighbour.

Mr. Sin Son Ho (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Allow me first to warmly welcome Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, and acknowledge his presence in this important place on this particular occasion.

Allow me also to sincerely congratulate Cuba for the absolute majority support received this morning from the States Members of the United Nations (see A/67/PV.35). My delegation fully associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Algeria and Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively, as well as those by other regional groups and speakers before my delegation.

Twenty-one years have passed since the General Assembly first began deliberating today's agenda item at its forty-sixth session. As all of us are very well aware, the United States has been enforcing the full-scale blockade against Cuba for more than 50 years for the purpose of overthrowing the Government of Cuba, which has caused enormous damage to the economic development and welfare of the Cuban people. The Cuban Government estimates that its people have suffered over $1 trillion in damages under the blockade.

The 1996 Helms-Burton Act extending the embargo to reach third countries trading with Cuba escalated the unilateral arbitrariness of the United States. The United States embargo against Cuba is a serious violation of the principles of self-determination, sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs and free trade stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations. The extrajudicial, unilateral coercive measures seeking to change the political, economic and social systems of other countries based on the values of a specific country can never be justified in any case.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea consistently opposes all forms of intervention and sanctions against sovereign States. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea delegation voted this morning in favour of resolution 67/4, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", and strongly urges the United States to immediately lift the embargo against Cuba, in

conformity with the will of the overwhelming majority of the States Members of the United Nations.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea reiterates its firm support for and solidarity with the righteous cause of the Cuban Government and people to safeguard their national sovereignty.

Mr. Lazarev (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus would like to welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, to our debate today.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) at the 35th meeting.

Today the General Assembly has once again adopted a resolution (resolution 67/4) entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". Once again, the vast majority of Member States supported the resolution urging the United States to end the blockade. We would hope that the United States, which counts itself among the civilized States, will finally understand the irrationality and short-sightedness of the pressure it has continued to exert for more than half a century on Cuba.

Belarus rejects sanctions and unilateral enforcement measures. Such measures contravene the Charter and the principles of international law. Unilateral enforcement measures are a flagrant and massive extraterritorial violation of the human rights of the citizens of the countries against whom they are introduced.

Belarus, as a State that has itself experienced unilateral enforcement sanctions, has on many occasions indicated the need for more active steps by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights aimed at persuading the United States and other countries to refrain from the wanton and crude tactic of applying political and economic pressure on sovereign States. It is for that reason that Belarus is calling for the establishment of the post of a special rapporteur to the Human Rights Council on the unacceptability of resorting to unilateral enforcement measures. That idea was supported at the recent sixteenth NAM Summit.

Belarus states here in the General Assembly, with a full sense of responsibility, that it is impossible to bend a sovereign State to one's will by blackmail, intimidation, threats or political and economic pressure. We therefore voted in favour of the resolution. We sincerely hope that the resolution and the appeal by the international community will be heeded by the United States and other States applying unilateral enforcement measures.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by expressing my country's support for the statements delivered at the 35th meeting by the representatives of Algeria, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and Iran, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), respectively. I would like to welcome Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and to assure him and his friendly country of our full support.

The principles of sovereign equality among States and non-interference in their internal affairs are the main foundations on which international law is built. For that very reason, the Charter of the United Nations and the Organization's decisions and resolutions have stressed, since its creation, the sanctity of those principles and the need for all Member States of the United Nations to respect them.

Since the unilateral embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba and the measures taken to tightly enforce it run counter to the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law governing relations among States, human rights, international humanitarian law and the rules of international trade, the embargo is de facto illegal, inhumane and incompatible with the standards set forth by the international community as the basis of relations among States. It also represents an unprecedented challenge to international law and to the credibility of the legality of unilateral American policies.

The embargo that has been in force against Cuba for more than 50 years has created a precedent that has been rejected as unilateral by States, as it lies outside the bounds of international law. It is also a cause of embarrassment for the United Nations. Moreover, the embargo has subjected Cuba to all forms of economic, political and social harm. It has entrenched the suffering of the Cuban people and put the United States in an embarrassingly direct opposition to the unanimous international opposition to the embargo. It has led to financial losses totalling $1 trillion.

The General Assembly has been discussing the item for over 20 consecutive years. It has adopted resolutions that have enjoyed overwhelming majority support. Many specialized political and regional organizations and agencies have adopted similar decisions. However, and regrettably, the economic, financial and trade embargo imposed on Cuba is still in effect as if nothing had happened. The fact that 188 States voted in favour of resolution 67/4 at the current session in itself confirms once again that Member States unanimously recognize the illegitimacy of the embargo imposed on Cuba and call for an end to it.

The Syrian Arab Republic confirms that unilateral economic measures, which have been imposed by the United States, the European Union and other States, represent a flagrant violation of the principles of international law. They are a hegemonic tool of the West, which is suffering from a superiority complex with regard to other countries and peoples; that tool serves only for oppression and economic and political coercion. Such measures aim at influencing the independence of national political decisions and at interfering in the internal affairs of Member States in a way that runs counter to the provisions of the Charter. It is also a manifestation of a policy of collective punishment that those States pursue.

Such illegitimate and unjust measures can only foment negative feelings towards the West. The majority of such measures have been imposed by Western States, particularly the United States of America and the States of the European Union. Such measures aim at weakening the Governments of other States Members of the United Nations or at bringing pressure to bear on those Governments in order to force them to change their national policies.

My country would like to reiterate its condemnation of the sanctions imposed by the United States, the European Union and other States. We wish to stress the toll and adverse effects that such illegitimate unilateral measures have taken on the life and prosperity of the Syrian people. Those unilateral illegitimate measures prevent Syrians from meeting their basic needs, in terms of access to medications, food, medical equipment, gas for household use, fuel for heating, agricultural needs, civil aviation transportation services and communications equipment.

In that context, we recall that the imposition of coercive unilateral measures is a violation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 66/186, entitled "Unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries", and resolution 66/156, entitled "Human rights and unilateral coercive measures", in which the General Assembly stressed its condemnation and rejection of unilateral economic measures, as it considered such measures to be an impediment to healthy trade relations among States and an obstruction to the full realization of the rights provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. In that context, I would mention the right of individuals and peoples to development.

Such measures prevent the enjoyment by each and every individual of a living standard that guarantees the rights to health, prosperity and access to food, medical treatment, education and the necessary social services. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has already stressed that the unilateral sanctions imposed on my country, Syria, have had a major impact on trade revenues, foreign exchange, shrinking productivity and work opportunities, and the deterioration of the economic and social prosperity of the population, particularly among middle- and low-income groups. We then see the parties that impose unilateral coercive measures on my people talking about how keen they are to protect human rights in Syria. He who commits arson cannot also be a firefighter; that is an act of political hypocrisy that must be rejected.

In accordance with its mandate, the General Assembly is called upon to take the necessary measures to put an end to the unilateral, unjust and hostile embargoes and economic sanctions policies that are being pursued by some States in violation of international law.

It is disadvantageous and injurious to the United States that Israel was one of only three States that voted against resolution 67/4. The overwhelming majority of Member States voted in favour. In that regard, my delegation would hope that all forms of embargo and unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States on Cuba and many other States, including my country, Syria, will be brought to an end. My country also hopes that the Israeli embargo and siege imposed on the Palestinian people will be lifted as well. We hope that the voice of the international community expressed by the General Assembly and other international institutions and organizations will be respected by the

United States of America and fully taken into account by its legislative institutions.

Some have, in fact, felt optimistic about the fact that the America president was re-elected for a second term and that United States intervention in the internal affairs of States might now abate. In the light of the foregoing, my country voted in favour of resolution 67/4.

The Acting President: I would like to remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes.

Mr. Emiliou (Cyprus): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

The United States trade policy towards Cuba is fundamentally a bilateral issue. However, American legislation such as the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996 has extended the effects of the United States embargo to third-party countries. In the framework of the common commercial policy, the European Union has firmly and continuously opposed such extraterritorial measures. While we acknowledge the decision by the United States Government to lift restrictions on remittances and family travel to Cuba, we cannot accept that unilaterally imposed measures could impede our economic and commercial relations with Cuba.

To address the problem, in November 1996, the European Union Council of Ministers adopted a regulation and a joint action to protect the interests of natural legal persons residing in Europe against the consequences of the aforementioned Acts. Furthermore, at the summit between the European Union and the United States held in London in May 1998, a package was agreed that also sought to alleviate the problems caused by extraterritorial legislation. It covered waivers to Titles III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act, a commitment by the United States Government to resist future extraterritorial legislation of that kind, and an understanding regarding discipline to strengthen investment protection. It is urgent that the United States implement that agreement.

The European Union's policy towards Cuba was set out in a Common Position in 1996. Reaffirming the validity of that Common Position, in June 2008 the European Union lifted the restrictive measures imposed on Cuba in 2003. The dialogue with the authorities in Havana was resumed without preconditions and on a basis of reciprocity and non-discrimination. Five ministerial sessions of political dialogue have been held with the Cuban Government, addressing issues of common interest, including human rights, which is a question at the core of relations with all third countries, including Cuba. We reaffirm our determination to pursue a comprehensive results-oriented dialogue with the Cuban authorities, as well as with representatives of civil society and the peaceful pro-democracy opposition, in accordance with EU policies. We reiterate the right of Cuban citizens to decide their future independently.

We are encouraged by the release of all the political prisoners from the group of 75 imprisoned in 2003, together with other political prisoners. We reiterate our call on the Cuban Government to grant its citizens full, internationally recognized civil, political and economic rights and freedoms, including the freedoms of assembly and expression and free access to information; to ratify the United Nations International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and, following the visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, to extend invitations to other rapporteurs to visit Cuba.

Cuba's restrictions on rights and freedoms undermine and offset its achievements in health care and education. Similarly, Cuba's domestic economic policy seriously hampers its own economic development. In that context, we note the adoption by the Cuban Parliament in August 2011 of a package of economic and social reforms, and we expect them to be extended and implemented in a manner that will address the key concerns of the Cuban population. The economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the United States contributes to the economic problems in Cuba, negatively affecting the living standards of the Cuban people. The lifting of the United States embargo would facilitate an opening up of Cuba's economy to the benefit of the Cuban people. Together, we again express our rejection of all unilateral measures directed against Cuba that are contrary to commonly accepted rules of international trade. We urge the Cuban authorities to bring about real improvements in all the areas mentioned.

Despite their continued concerns about and criticisms of the human rights situation in Cuba, the member States of the European Union voted unanimously in favour of resolution 67/4.

Ms. Nyamudeza (Zimbabwe): My delegation associates itself with the statements made at the 35th meeting by the representatives of Cape Verde, Algeria and Iran on behalf of the African Group, the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively. We are explaining our vote on resolution 67/4 not just out of solidarity with the people of the Republic of Cuba. We do it out of a sense of revulsion at the nature of the economic blockade, which is one of collective punishment. We deplore such sanctions for the harm they do to the people of Cuba and for their illegal application under international law.

We in Zimbabwe know well the effect of such economic punishment. Our country is enduring an economic blockade of similar effect and consequences. Such unilateral measures are evil in their nature; in our case, they are based on the racist premise that Africans should not be masters of their economic potential and should not enjoy the benefits that accrue from their endowment of natural resources without the mediation — nay, blackmail — of erstwhile colonizers and their fellow travellers. That is as abhorrent to us as is the unacceptable situation in which Cuba has found itself for some five decades.

We hope that those who are imposing the economic blockade on Cuba will take cognizance of the global opposition to their behaviour and that they will relent. The Cuban people should be left alone to shape their destiny without hindrance. We stand by them as does, clearly, a preponderant part of the world.

Mr. Bart (Saint Kitts and Nevis): Saint Kitts and Nevis would like to add its voice in support of the resolution on agenda item 41, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", and to give our reasons for voting in favour of resolution 67/4. My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Barbados and Algeria on behalf of the Caribbean Community and the Group of 77 and China, respectively, and by the representative of Chile on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/67/PV.35).

Over the years, Saint Kitts and Nevis has had good relations with the United States of America, and that country continues to be one of our closest and strongest partners. We respect the role that the United States has played in international relations and in the establishment and promotion of this very body. It is a global leader, and we acknowledge and remain grateful for its role in international affairs.

While recognizing recent concessions that have been made on the matter of the Cuban embargo, Saint Kitts and Nevis feels that they are not enough, and that much more should be done. As we have said before, in spite of our size we are prepared to signal wrongdoing and speak truth to power when a platform presents itself to do so. Today, we do the same in supporting and voting for the resolution.

This is an extremely important battle that goes to the core of international relations, sovereignty, non-intervention and the strengthened role of the United Nations in international affairs. For the past 21 years, Members have voted in favour of the resolution to end the embargo. This year, it continues to have the overwhelming support of the international community. Saint Kitts and Nevis, in its contribution to the Secretary-General's report on the matter (A/67/118), advised that we do not support or apply any laws or measures that restrict the free flow of international trade. We also advised that we do not apply laws with extraterritorial effect that impinge on the sovereignty of other States and the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction. That is a principled position adopted by Member States of this body.

Saint Kitts and Nevis feels very strongly, therefore, about bringing the embargo imposed on Cuba to an end. Cuba is a pan-Caribbean partner. It has aided in the development of the health-care systems and other areas in Saint Kitts and Nevis. There is much from which the international community has benefited, and can benefit, in cooperating with Cuba, just as Saint Kitts and Nevis has benefited.

It is disheartening that, although the resolutions calling for an end to the embargo have received overwhelming support from the international community for the past 21 consecutive years, the sanctions have been maintained. That unilateral initiative has stunted the growth of the Cuban people and has affected their social and economic development. The embargo is wrong on all levels, but none more so than humanitarian grounds.

We implore all Member States to respect the sanctity of the General Assembly and the decisions it takes. The continued failure to respect United Nations decisions continues to undermine multilateralism and the functioning of the United Nations system. It is my delegation's hope that the two countries, Cuba and the United States of America, can improve their relationship and embark on a process of partnership and cooperation. Saint Kitts and Nevis believes that the discontinuation of the embargo would go a long way towards improving relations and cooperation between the two countries. The issue is now no longer seen as a matter of merely bilateral interest, but of multilateral concern, we join the call of the international community on the United States to discontinue the embargo.

Mr. Thu (Myanmar): I am taking the floor to explain my delegation's position on resolution 67/4, which was just adopted by an overwhelming majority of Member States. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, for his important statement.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Myanmar has steadfastly adhered to the principled position of the Movement in strongly opposing the use of unilateral trade and economic sanctions against some members of the Movement for the purpose of exerting political pressure. In fact, they are counterproductive and undermine the cause of human rights, particularly the right of peoples to development.

As a country confronted with similar unilateral sanctions for decades, Myanmar fully understands from its own experience the extent of the hardship and suffering caused by unilateral sanctions, which directly affect the people of the country, especially the vulnerable groups of women and children. We are thus sympathetic to the fact that the decades-long embargo imposed on Cuba has caused massive economic damage and hardship to the country and its people, preventing the country from fully developing its economic potential.

Therefore, my delegation has always taken the principled position of joining the international community every year in calling for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba in order to relieve the suffering of the people. Myanmar fully subscribes to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter, especially the principle of the sovereign equality of nations. Adherence to those principles will contribute to the elimination of tension and confrontation between States. We therefore believe that the embargo and coercive measures should be replaced by dialogue and cooperation.

For those reasons, Myanmar has once again voted in favour of the resolution on the subject.

Mr. Awinador-Kanyirige (Ghana): Ghana aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the African Group, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 plus China (see A/67/PV.35).

Ghana has never supported the imposition of the economic, commercial and financial embargo by the United States of America against Cuba. Ghana's position is informed by its commitment to its obligation to adhere to the United Nations Charter. It is also morally indefensible to deny the people of the sovereign State of Cuba the benefits derived from external trade. Ghana wishes to appeal to the United States Congress to heed the clarion call repeated over the past 22 years to help rectify the major hiccup in multilateralism that the embargo represents. Over the years, Cuba has demonstrated the spirit of multilateralism and international cooperation by playing host to thousands of students from Africa, who return to their respective countries to contribute to the development of their countries and global progress.

It is our hope that the issue of the embargo can be resolved more expeditiously to help us put it behind us and move forward together with the friendly peoples of Cuba and the United States of America.

Mr. Oyarzábal (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina's vote in favour of resolution 67/4 reflects our positive stance with respect to the elimination of the type of unilateral and illegitimate measure that the embargo represents. The Government of the Argentine Republic is committed to fully implementing the provisions of the resolution just adopted.

Argentina maintains a strong commitment to multilateralism as a legitimate instrument for resolving disputes between States and as the primary means of responding to the major challenges that require close cooperation between countries. The embargo against Cuba is contrary to international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Argentine legislation on the subject established, through Act No. 24,871 of 1997, that foreign legislation that seeks, through the imposition of an economic

embargo or limits on investment in a given country, to have extraterritorial legal effects in order to bring about a change of Government in a country or to affect its right to self-determination, shall be absolutely inapplicable and devoid of legal effect. Moreover, it stipulated that foreign legislation that puts limits, through the imposition of an economic embargo, on investment in a given country or imposes restrictions on the free circulation of persons, services or goods, or seeks to have extraterritorial legal effects in order to bring about a change of Government in a country or to affect its right to self-determination, shall also be absolutely inapplicable and devoid of legal effect.

It is therefore unacceptable that, despite the reiterated and practically unanimous calls from the international community, in particular the General Assembly, for its elimination, the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba persists. We must eliminate such coercive unilateral measures, which cause irreparable harm to the well-being of peoples. Argentina joins others in rejecting the embargo and reiterates its stance against such measures and its determined support to Cuba's call to end the embargo.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba for the overwhelming majority support enjoyed by resolution 67/4, which was adopted this morning. We voted in favour of the resolution just adopted under agenda item 41 on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. The views of the Islamic Republic of Iran on this important issue were articulated before the vote this morning in the statement delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, in explaining our vote after the voting, I would like to state the following.

The unilateral embargo has an extended negative effect on companies and citizens from third countries, thereby violating their sovereign rights. The Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its deep concern at the harmful impact on other countries resulting from the extraterritorial nature of the embargo, which we consider an added argument in favour of the prompt elimination of all unfounded sanctions.

The Assembly has repeatedly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other kinds of coercive economic measures that hurt the progress and prosperity of people all over the world. The Assembly has also called upon States to respect their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law and to repeal and invalidate laws and measures that have extraterritorial effects on other States. The embargo, particularly through its extraterritorial effects, adversely affects the economic prosperity of the targeted countries. Sanctions increase commodity and energy prices and limit the access of States to markets, investment, technology and financial services, and even scientific, educational and cultural events, and thus contribute to global economic stagnation and hamper sound and healthy relations among nations. Examples of such embargoes are the measures imposed unilaterally against Cuba and Iran, which have brought extra pressure on the targeted countries.

It is unfortunate that, in spite of the General Assembly's yearly rejection of the United States embargo against Cuba, the embargo remains in full force. We see such enforcement as a violation of world opinion and an act that severely undermines multilateralism and the credibility of the United Nations itself. Multilateralism remains the best route for resolving disputes and guaranteeing the peaceful coexistence of States. The Islamic Republic of Iran has therefore supported all initiatives against embargoes as a tool to exert political and economic pressure on other States. We shall continue to support Cuba in its right to have access to global economic, commercial and financial exchanges in order to promote cooperation and development.

Our close ties and friendship with Cuba and the Cuban people lead us to vehemently oppose the blockade and emphasize the urgent need to put an end to such inhumane measures against Cuba and other developing countries and to fully implement the resolution just adopted (resolution 67/4).

Mr. Mashabane (South Africa): We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the people and the Government of Cuba on the adoption of resolution 67/4, "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", with the support of almost all members of the General Assembly. The peoples of the world have today spoken loudly and in no uncertain terms against the grave injustice being committed against the people of Cuba. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba for his attendance on this historic

occasion, when the General Assembly adopted this crucial resolution.

The question of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba has been and continues to be a persistent problem for the United Nations, despite many calls for its elimination. It is for that reason that South Africa would like to reiterate its support for the lifting of the United States embargo against Cuba. In doing so, South Africa supports the resolution that has just been adopted.

The continued imposition of the embargo by the United States of America against Cuba is a flagrant violation of the principles of the sovereign equality of States and of non-intervention and non-interference in domestic affairs. Furthermore, the blockade constitutes a violation of international law, and its imposition shows disregard for the noble principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

As a result of the laws and regulations that define the blockade, Cuba is unable to freely export and import products and services to or from the United States and cannot use United States dollars to carry out its international financial transactions or hold accounts in that currency in third countries' banks. Cuba is also not allowed to receive credits from international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund or the Inter-American Development Bank. In addition, bilateral economic ties between Cuba and South Africa in particular, and other friendly nations in general, are further hampered and restricted by United States domestic law. That has led to the economic and social suffering of the Cuban civilian population, who bear the brunt of this injustice. This situation needs to end.

It is our well-considered view that the embargo violates the rights of the people of Cuba to socioeconomic development. It is therefore against that backdrop that South Africa has repeatedly joined the majority of countries in expressing opposition to all aspects of the blockade and the unilateral action by the United States.

South Africa is pleased to announce that an agreement in the matter of economic assistance for Cuba has been duly ratified by the National Assembly of South Africa. The Agreement and ratification documents have been submitted to the President for final ratification. It is expected that all formalities will be concluded by the end of 2012. That is a breakthrough in relations and cooperation and reaffirms South Africa's commitment and ongoing support for Cuba.

The international community recognizes Cuba's outstanding work in the areas of health, education and biotechnology in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and the underdeveloped world in particular and the world in general. A total of 321 South Africans who have graduated in Cuba are working as medical doctors in various South African hospitals, and a further 408 South African students are currently studying medicine in Cuba. Furthermore, the Extended Health Cooperation Agreement signed between the two parties on Africa Day, 25 May, in Pretoria, makes provision for, among other things, the training of an additional 1,000 South African students in Cuba, in an attempt to address the country's shortage of medical doctors. The embargo stifles that outstanding contribution to economic and social development and hinders the betterment of the lives of the poor.

South Africa therefore supports the lifting of the United States of America's embargo against Cuba, and we refrain from recognizing unilateral measures and laws of a coercive nature that defy the principles of the United Nations Charter and norms of international law. We remain grateful for the role that Cuba and its people played in our struggle against colonialism, oppression and apartheid in Africa.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands): Let me begin by associating myself with the statement delivered at the 35th meeting by the representatives of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and of Barbados, our fellow small island developing State, on behalf of the Caribbean Community, and all those who spoke in favour of resolution 67/4 today.

My delegation congratulates Cuba on the adoption of the resolution in the presence of Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba. As in previous years, the Solomon Islands voted in favour of the 21-year-old resolution, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". We do so as the embargo continues to claim enormous losses, including loss of life, and to work against the principles, letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

The world annually makes an appeal to our friend and partner, the United States of America, to show some care and to have compassion when it comes to

the severity of its prolonged sanctions against the people of Cuba. When sanctions defy international and humanitarian law, embargoes cause needless suffering, and an extraterritorial blockade restrains a country's development aspirations, which speaks of nothing short of a disharmonious relationship between two neighbours. In other words, the United States embargo is based on the concept that what is bad for Cuba is good for the United States of America.

A positive and engaging atmosphere is needed. In that connection, the United Nations, as an organization responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, is the rightful place to address such issues. So we welcome the resolution. The resolution stands for peace. It speaks for respect for good-neighbourly relations in principle, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It is in that regard that the Solomon Islands once again humbly requests the United States to reach out and give peace a chance.

The credibility of the Organization rests on the actions we take as members of this global institution. The lifting of the embargo, especially by a friend and partner with absolute power, will create the needed positive relationship. We, the Members of the United Nations, should not embrace multilateralism only when it suits the United States and discard it at our convenience; rather, we must honour and live up to our Charter responsibilities, as the people depend on it.

For more than 50 years the Cuban people have continued to stand tall against those difficult circumstances. We continue to recognize Cuba's resilience, friendship and solidarity as it continues to extend assistance to countries all over the world, including those in the Pacific and the Solomon Islands, helping us to achieve our Millennium Development Goals via the training of our medical students.

The suggestion made today by Cuba's Minister for Foreign Affairs (see A/67/PV.35) of submitting a draft agenda to its neighbour the United States, aimed at normalizing relations, is welcomed by the General Assembly. My delegation hopes that Cuba's outreach to the United States will be reciprocated by the United States through the unconditional lifting of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba and the strengthening of multilateralism. We will continue to support the resolution as we move forward.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

One representative has asked to take the floor in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind him that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. Godard has continued to repeat the same story that he has recounted to the Assembly every year in seeking to uphold the Bush policy and now that of President Obama. That story will not become true simply through repetition. Only four of the paragraphs that he read out today were not an almost word-for-word repetition of the statement that was delivered last year (see A/66/PV.41). Mr. Godard repeats himself, but the blockade does not change. It is a remnant of the Cold War.

Mr. Godard lies in saying that the blockade exists out of respect for the Cuban people's right to freely determine their future. We are here because the United States Government has sought to impose its own designs on Cuba over the course of a century since 1901, when the United States imposed, through military occupation, the Platt Amendment, which allowed it to intervene in Cuba and occupy the Guantánamo naval base, which it continues to usurp. We are here because the Cuban people have defended their right to self-determination and independence with their own blood on the shores of Playa Girón and when faced with the threat of a nuclear holocaust in the October 1962 crisis or the missile crisis. Nobody believes that the United States Government is interested in the freedom of the Cuban people, after having dishonoured that freedom for half a century and lent its support to bloody dictatorships in Cuba and throughout the region. What it wishes to achieve in Cuba is a docile Government that supports its interests, and that is not going to happen.

The Cuban people gained their freedom on their own and have resolutely exercised their right to self-determination. They have demonstrated that will in the popular discourse of economic and social policies and in the elections under way. They nominate their own candidates; there is a massive turnout to vote for them and they revoke them when they choose. There are no special interests in Cuba, no corruption and no political manoeuvring. We do not waste $3 billion on a presidential or senatorial campaigns, and Cuba is not a plutocracy where the 1 per cent imposes its interests.

It would be worthwhile to listen to the people of the United States and respect their right to decide for themselves; to listen to the people who make up 90 per cent of the populace and not a handful of the wealthy who benefit from the current system; to listen to those who want to occupy Wall Street, rather than seeking to rescue the bankers who receive scandalous bonuses. They should stop brutally repressing the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations and put an end to the widespread arrests of peaceful demonstrators and the harassment of immigrants and minorities.

I repeat that the blockade is an act of genocide. I note that Mr. Godard did not deny that this time around. One would have to be cynical, if one were to refer to the human rights and the freedom, prosperity and well-being of the Cuban people after having listened to the examples that I mentioned concerning the harm the blockade has caused to the children of my country. They should stop wasting the money of their honourable workers, whose taxes are going to pay mercenaries and special agents, and eliminate the quadrennial budget of more than $196 billion to create alleged dissidents.

Mr. Godard, who was for years was the head of the Miami Office of the Coordinator of Cuban Affairs, is fully aware of what we are talking about. The United States Government lacks any moral authority to speak of human rights. Furthermore, in addition to a deplorable historic record of military aggressions and coups d'état, it has caused tens of thousands of disappearances, murders and acts of torture. It is responsible for tens, even hundreds of extrajudicial executions, acts of torture, abductions, secret flights, secret prisons and a concentration camp in Guantánamo.

If one believes that the economic blockade is necessary as a pretext, one should do away with the pretext and prove it. If the United States Government wishes to support Cuban agricultural purchases, then put an end to the discriminatory sale measures; allow private credit; accept the norms of international trade and authorize the use of vessels of other countries and do not penalize them for a six-month period; allow Cuban exports in exchange for the purchase of foodstuffs, which have fallen drastically as a result of the conditions that have been imposed by the United States Government upon producers and which have led our Cuban importers to seek out better markets; advocate a free flow of information; lift the blockade in the telecommunications sector; allow for a Cuban connection to the submarine cables in order to improve Internet access; put an end to illegal and subversive broadcasting on the radio and television; allow the purchase of United States software and the training of specialists; put an end to information technology restrictions and permit the use of those services that provide technological support but have been prohibited to date from export to Cuba.

If they wish for more exchanges and contact between the peoples, then they should respect the constitutional right and the freedom of United States citizens to travel to Cuba, as they are free to travel to any other country, even in times of war. They should stop imposing restrictions on the granting of licences and accept that walking and listening to Cuban music and dancing are not crimes and can be part of the activities offered by travel agencies.

If they wish to see better education for young people, then cooperation and exchange programmes should be authorized between universities, including grants in all realms of science and technology; an end should be put to the subversive and illegal use of training by the United States Interests Section in Havana; and the obstacles to international medical cooperation should be removed.

The representative of the United States lies when he affirms that his country is one of the leading donors of humanitarian aid to Cuba. He has used false figures, which include the millions of dollars that the United States Agency for International Development uses to subvert the constitutional order in my country, amounts for commercial licences that have never materialized, and the small but generous and greatly appreciated donations that non-governmental organizations, in defiance of the policies of their Government, send to Cuba, overcoming enormous obstacles. Cuban emigrants, like other emigrants, painstakingly save remittances from their hard work. That is not humanitarian aid provided by the United States Government.

Mr. Alan Gross was punished under due process for carrying out covert operations that were funded by the United States Government and made use of non-commercial technology against the Cuban constitutional order. Those acts were provided for and sanctioned under United States law. Mr. Godard lies when he says that Mr. Gross helped the Jewish community to gain access to the Internet. The United States Government is responsible for the situation of

Mr. Gross, and it could start by sitting down for a serious discussion of the case with the Cuban Government.

President Obama has the opportunity to make a difference and to go down in history as having modified a mistaken policy that has failed to work for more than 50 years and has caused irreparable human damage and massive violations of human rights. Perhaps then Mr. Godard could come back to the Assembly to say that something has truly changed.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 41?

It was so decided.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I would like to make the following announcement concerning the work of the plenary. Consideration of agenda item 32, "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict", originally scheduled for Thursday, 6 December, has been postponed to Monday, 17 December.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.